

PURE RELIGION

Of Rabbits and Men

Not long after arriving on the island of Samar in the Philippines, Henry and Janice Peacock of Lindon, Utah, described the island: “There are no jobs, no industry, no trade. The people live on a diet consisting almost completely of rice. Although fish once were plentiful, due to fishing practices that damaged the surrounding reefs, few could be found now. And because there is little capacity for refrigeration, meat cannot be stored easily. The lack of protein has left many of the children with severe learning disabilities.”

As humanitarian service missionaries, Elder and Sister Peacock knew they were supposed to find ways to help, but the need seemed so great it all but overwhelmed them. Sister Peacock had worked as a salesclerk and hairstylist, and while these experiences had provided income and experience, she felt inadequate standing in the face of such massive need. Why had the Lord sent her to the Philippines, she wondered? What could she—a housewife and mother—do to help these wonderful people who were so burdened with heavy worries and ponderous griefs?

As she grappled with these challenges, Sister Peacock thought back to her childhood days in Lindon, Utah. She remembered a neighbor who had an orchard of fruit trees. In between the rows of cherry and apple trees, he raised rabbits. Dozens of them. Hundreds of them. They bred quickly and provided an excellent and inexpensive source of protein. In fact, as a

young girl, Sister Peacock had raised rabbits herself. Why couldn't the people of Samar do the same? Raising rabbits would not only help individuals and families, it could also provide a business opportunity for many who could not find employment.



Elder and Sister Peacock went immediately to work on the idea. “Meetings were held, people were taught and motivated, information was gathered and published, bureaucracies were approached and influenced. Miracles began to happen,” Sister Peacock later wrote.

Elder and Sister Peacock not only introduced rabbits to the people of Samar, they began encouraging people to grow vegetables as well. “Vegetables appeared on the tables where once only rice was present,” Sister Peacock reported. “People were nourished, and budgets were supplemented. Sales of vegetables, meats, and hides started.” As more families participated, children became healthy and families found needed income.

When the time finally came for the Peacocks to leave their mission assignment, they could look back on their efforts with joy and astonishment. At the end of a year and a half, more than 700 families were raising rabbits, and more than 1,000 had gardens. As Elder and Sister Peacock looked over the hundreds of lives that had been blessed because of their service, they began to understand why the Lord had sent them to the Philippines.